

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Feb 21st 2013

Taken together, the theme of today's readings is well summarized by the Psalm response: Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me. In the first reading we enter into an emotionally-gripping drama as we find Esther "seized with mortal anguish" lying on the floor "from morning until evening" pleading with God for help. Fear, desperation, and loneliness fill her voice as she implores God to "turn our mourning into gladness and our sorrows into wholeness." In today's gospel we listen to a didactic lesson from Jesus as he teaches his disciples—in a certain and matter-of-fact tone—"For everyone who asks, receives." He promises that God will answer our prayers if we but only ask. In Jesus's analogies, God's attentive care for his children seems commonsensical and unquestionable. If our child is hungry, why would we give them an inedible stone?

Today's readings seem to fit a unified theme, discussing what it means to put our faith in God and trust our prayers will be answered. That is, until we get to a rather clumsy end to the gospel—one that could easily overshadow the prior message in recognition, or, conversely, be omitted on account of thematic incongruity. What does saying, "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you." have to do with God responding to our prayers?

In regards to the situation with my friend, I did a good deal of praying. Admittedly, I prayed that my friend might understand that the request was unreasonable and that I would be able to talk to my parents. Neither of these things was given to me, because these were not the things I needed. God instead gave me what I needed when I asked for help. I was given the courage to tell my friend why I was upset. I received many loving people who offered me guidance and support in the days of my decision-making. These people reminded me that I had to treat my friend in the way that I would want to be treated in this situation. God did not put my prayers off for a more important or reasonable request, but treated me with providence and grace. In this way, the "Golden Rule" not only tells us how to treat each other, it promises us that God will always care and provide for us in the ways that our Lord intended us to be loved. Just as Esther did, "Ask and it will be given unto you; seek and you shall find."

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